

# This is Design Review

## *in Seattle*

encouraging & incorporating...



communication  
& participation



better  
design

### Navigating Seattle's Project Design Review

Just how Seattle handles design review is rather confusing to many. To demystify the process, we have composed this document to explain who does what in carrying out the important function of project design review.

creating & enhancing...



sensitive  
development

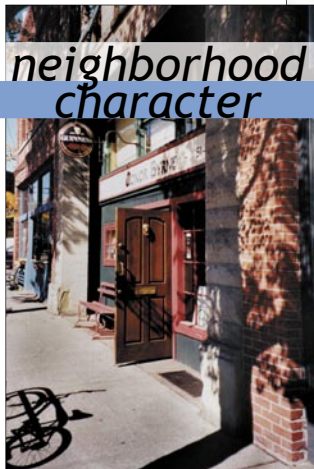


consistency in  
neighborhoods

Seattle is unique in having an intricate network of review bodies—staffed by citizen volunteers—that work in close coordination to ensure thorough review of major projects, whether public or private, under development within the city.

This network includes the Seattle Design Commission and the Seattle Planning Commission, both of which are advisory to the City at large; seven neighborhood-based design review boards that advise DPD in carrying out regulatory review of private multifamily and commercial projects; and a centralized Landmarks Board, along with several additional area-specific boards, charged with regulatory review of Seattle's historic districts.

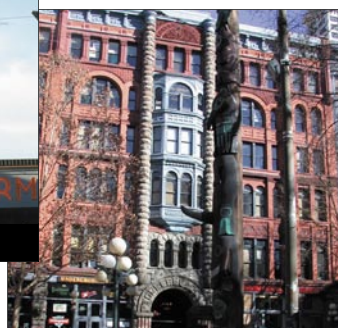
preserving & protecting...



neighborhood  
character



historical  
value



architectural  
significance

Project Design Review Throughout Seattle...

	Design Commission	Design Review Boards	Planning Commission	Historic District Boards				Landmarks Preservation Board
	 Olympic Sculpture Park	 The Greenlake	 Northgate	 Interurban Building	 Public Market	 Chong Wa Benevolent Assn.	 Cors and Wegener Building	 Admiral Theater
established								
when	1968	1994	1911	1970	1971	1973	1976	1973
why	City officials wanted oversight of the City's capital projects, starting with those created by the voter-approved Forward Thrust Bond.	Citizens, designers and developers decried the incompatible design of many buildings built in the 1980s, the result of the City's prescriptive land use code.	Voters, after two decades of fast growth, passed an amendment to create a commission to draw up plans for the city's future expansion.	Visionaries and activists were concerned that a ring road proposed by the City's urban renewal plans would raze most of the area's historic buildings.	Voters, worried that Pike Place Market would be demolished under an urban renewal plan, passed an initiative to preserve the Market's character.	Community members were concerned that their neighborhood—and its Asian character—would be damaged by the development of the Kingdome.	Property owners wanted to preserve the qualities of its "small town main street" that reflected early 20th century America.	To provide protection for historic properties throughout the city, a citywide landmarks ordinance was enacted.
goal(s)	<div><div>To ensure that public facilities and projects within the City's right-of-way incorporate "design excellence."</div><div>To ensure wise allocation of the City's resources.</div><div>To ensure City projects fit the City's design goals.</div></div>	<div><div>To encourage better design and responsiveness to a site's context.</div><div>To provide flexibility in the application of the City's development standards.</div><div>To engage citizens and developers early in the design process to resolve issues.</div></div>	<div><div>To advise the Mayor, City Council and City departments on broad planning goals, policies and plans for the physical development of Seattle.</div><div>To engage citizens in the work of planning for the city's future.</div></div>	<div><div>To preserve the district's unique historic and architectural character.</div><div>To assure the sensitive rehabilitation of buildings.</div><div>To promote development of residential uses for all income levels.</div><div>To enhance the district's economic climate.</div></div>	<div><div>To preserve the character of Pike Place Market.</div><div>To perpetuate the district's architectural, cultural, economic and historical qualities.</div></div>	<div><div>To protect the district's character and architectural significance, emphasizing the neighborhood's Asian character.</div></div>	<div><div>To protect the district's significance and its historical and architectural values.</div><div>To create and maintain continuity of architectural characteristics, arrangement, and design of the district's buildings.</div></div>	<div><div>To identify, preserve, protect, and ensure appropriate alterations to landmarks.</div><div>To preserve, protect and ensure compatible alterations to the significant characteristics of the Harvard-Belmont, Columbia City and Ft. Lawton Districts.</div></div>
projects								
project type	City facilities (parks, libraries, etc.) and projects on City land or in right-of-way, including large transportation projects, street vacations, skybridges and special street uses	Private development (commercial and large-scale residential) above a certain threshold	Comp Plan, neighborhood plans, subarea plans, citywide or region-wide public infrastructure projects, major public projects and plans (e.g., Civic Center, major institution master plans)	Businesses, buildings, parks, open space, rights-of-way	Businesses, buildings, parks, open space, rights-of-way	Businesses, buildings, parks, open space, rights-of-way	Businesses, buildings, parks, open space, rights-of-way	Public or private building, site or object over 25 years old that meets designation criteria
what is reviewed	Exterior, public interiors, urban design, projects that affect the public right-of-way and streets	As detailed in the City's design guidelines—site plan; building's height, bulk and scale; architectural elements and materials; pedestrian environment; and landscaping	Policies, goals and plans that affect the City's future physical development	All alterations to public and private building exteriors, rights-of-way, open spaces, demolition, new construction, changes of use	Use in building/business; interior and exterior of all businesses/buildings; street use and design; use and design of park	All alterations to building exteriors, rights-of-way, public and private exterior, open spaces, demolition, new construction, changes of use	Changes to the exteriors of buildings visible from public right-of-way, park, street design	Exterior, interior and site may be designated for individual landmarks
project proponents	City agencies, private developers	Private developers	City agencies	Private developers, property owners, business owners, residents, public agencies	Private developers, property owners, business owners, residents, public agencies	Private developers, property owners, business owners, residents, public agencies	Private developers, property owners, business owners, residents, public agencies	Private developers, property owners, business owners, residents, public agencies
reviews per project	2-4	3-4	as needed on case by case basis	2	2	1	1	2
avg. reviews per year	100+	200+	as needed on case by case basis	120	250	75	20	100+
board								
# of boards	1	7	1	1	1	1	1	1
purview	Citywide	Neighborhood-based	City-wide	Pioneer Square Preservation Dist.	Pike Place Market Historical Dist.	International Special Review Dist.	Ballard Avenue Landmark Dist.	City-wide
# of board members	10	5 per board (35 total)	15	10	12	7	7	11
member terms	2 years + reappointment	2 years + reappointment	3-year terms, renewable	3 years + reappointment	3 years + reappointment	2 years + re-election/reppt.	2 years + re-election/reppt.	3 years + reappointment
appointed	by Mayor	by Mayor/Council	by Mayor	by Mayor	by Mayor	2 by Mayor; 5 elected within Dist.	2 by Mayor; 5 elected within Dist.	by Mayor
roles represented	architect (2), landscape architect (2), fine artist, engineer, urban planner, urban designer, member at large, Get Engaged	design professional, community representative, developer, business representative, resident, Get Engaged	an engineer or architect, an urban planner, ethnic minority members, and citizens active in neighborhood or community affairs, Get Engaged	architect (2), resident, retail business owner, property owner (2), historian/arch. historian, attorney, human services rep., Get Engaged	2 each: Allied Arts, Friends of the Market, AIA Seattle, district merchants, residents and property owners	Appointed: 2 members. Elected: business/property owners (2); resident, tenant or person interested in community (2); at-large member	Appointed: architect, community historian. Elected: property owners (2); property-business owners (2); tenant or resident	architects (2), historians (2), structural engineer, planning commissioner, real estate manager, finance, at-large (3), Get Engaged
meetings	Twice a month (1st & 3rd Thurs.)	Each board meets twice a month (days vary per board)	Twice a month (2nd & 4th Thurs.)	Twice a month (1st & 3rd Wed.)	Twice a month (2nd & 4th Wed.)	Twice a month (2nd & 4th Tues.)	Once a month (1st Thurs.)	Twice a month (1st & 3rd Wed.)
authority								
advises who?	Mayor, City Council, City departments	Department of Planning and Development Director	Mayor, City Council, and City departments	Mayor, City Council, Department of Neighborhoods Director	Mayor, City Council	Mayor, City Council, Department of Neighborhoods Director	Mayor, City Council, Department of Neighborhoods Director	Mayor, City Council
decisions	advisory	advisory/regulatory	advisory	regulatory	regulatory	regulatory	regulatory	regulatory



# Contact Information

## Seattle

### Design Commission

700 5th Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019  
(206) 615-1349  
[www.seattle.gov/designcommission](http://www.seattle.gov/designcommission)

### Design Review Boards

700 5th Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019  
(206) 684-4686  
[www.seattle.gov/designreview](http://www.seattle.gov/designreview)

## Seattle

### Planning Commission

700 5th Ave., Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019  
(206) 684-3486  
[www.seattle.gov/planningcommission](http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission)

### Historic Landmarks Boards/ Landmarks Preservation Board

Department of Neighborhoods  
700 5th Ave., Suite 1700  
P.O. Box 94649  
Seattle, WA 98124-4649  
(206) 684-0228  
[www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods)



Photo credit: Johnston Architects



City of Seattle  
Department of Planning and Development